Read, Feb. 1
C. H. M.

Umsunduzi, Sept. 8th 1854.

To "The Soc. of Inquiry"
Prin. Theol. Sem'y

Dear Friends

A kind letter from your committee, Mr. H. B. Pratt, has just come to hand, expressing much interest in the cause of missions, especially in Africa & making several inquiries as to our state & prospects, to which I will reply without delay.

As to the geography, climate &c the field we occupy i.e. our mission in S. A. extends something more than a hundred miles along the coast above & below Port Natal. We are to the N. E. of Kaffraria & so cut off from communication with the missions & people there, for want of joint mails &c that we hear & know but little of them, save what we get in the public prints.

We have now ten stations occupied, & there are two unoccupied by the failure of Mr. McKinney's health & by the death of Rev. S. D. Marsh. At most of these stations there is the nucleus of a native church; but our labors and churches are yet infantine, tho' encouraging.

The Kafir war did not extend to us at all, except in some of its remoter influences, so that I can give no results of it.

The climate of Natal is healthy, & for much of the year, very agreeable, tho sometimes hot, & subject to great changes, which need to be guarded against. One day last week the thermometer stood at 90° & above in the shade for some hours; & the next day or two it was down to 50° & a little above most of the time. But these are extremes & exceptions. We never have a fire except in the kitchen for cooking purposes, tho it wd at times be agreeable. We have had frost once or twice this year; but I have never seen ice here. Inland a hundred miles they have had several deep snows the past winter, & cold weather in which many cattle & some people died. But on these & many other kindred points I will send a paper (printed) fr wh. you will gather a good number of facts as to the physical character of Natal.

As to Africa (or the District of Natal) as a missionary field, I will add something, tho in many respects I fancy it does not differ essentially from many other fields. The superstitions, vices & degradation of the people are truly great, & nothing but earnest persevering prayerful effort on the part of Xns, together with the Spirit of God sent down with power will ever recover a single soul here from the bondage of Sin — & the same is also true every where — even in "favored America".

But hard as the field is, & forbidding as the prospect of laboring for such people, is in the estimation of many, in my opinion, a given amount of effort will tell as much here as any where. It cannot be expected that the results of a hundred missionaries' labor for a quarter of a century & for a continent of the most degraded heathen, will equal the results of thousands of ministers & many other Xn efforts for ages in civilized minds.

But I have had native children come to me from out of the depths of heathenism around us, & with fifteen minutes instruction per day they have not only learned to read, but have actually read all the books which are to be had in their own language, all in a single year. I have a boy now with me whom I am able to teach but once in a week, but in two months he has learned his alphabet & to read & spell words of two syllables with fluency. Ignorant & superstitious & polluted as these sons & daughters of Africa are, they have minds to think & hearts to feel, & they can be taught the way of life; & God's power can make them new creatures, fit for the glories & the bliss of heaven. We hope it has thus changed & fitted some.

And now while I write I can count

around me no less than six natives who may be called "anxious inquirers" for the way of life – three of whom have expressed a decision to be baptized & admitted to the ch. Some, indeed, who once professed to be Xns. have fallen, & their fall was a fearful one. But if you knew what obstacles the friends of the gospel have to contend with here, & what plots are laid for their ruin, you would not, perhaps, wonder so much at their fall, tho' with us you would weep over them in their ruin. But we are happy in our work & bless God for the few manifestations which we believe he has been pleased to make of his grace & power among this people. Xt has commanded his followers to go into all the world, which imposes upon some the duty of going to Africa. And tho' the field is hard, the promise of God is sure. I expect Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God, & that the heathen here will be given to Xt for his inheritance. But God will accomplish this through the labors & prayers of his people, & blessed is the privilege of engaging in this good work.

We have, in our mission, representations from the Theol. Sems of the north & middle states, & I should be glad to welcome some from Princeton. The work is hard, but the pay sure & good – Come & See – With kind regards, Truly yours Lewis Grout.